DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 197 241 CG 014 888

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TITLE Conformity Behavior and Self-Consciousness.
PUB DATE Mar 80
NOTE 22p.: Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Southeastern Psychological Association (26th, Washington, DC, March 26-29, 1980).

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Behavior Patterns; Communication (Thought Transfer); *Conformity; Feedback; *Interpersonal Competence; *Peer Influence; *Perception; *Self Concept; Social Adjustment; Social Influences; Stimuli

ABSTRACT

Compliance, conforming behavior as a response to social influences, is affected by a variety of factors within the self. Some of these factors pertain to one's perceived place in the social context; others pertain to the salience of one's immediate affective and perceptual experience. The self-aspect chosen as the object of one's attention can have a critical impact on individual behavior. This conclusion was supported by data from an experiment in which subjects were asked to count metronome clicks heard over a set of headphones, and respond after other group members had agreed on an incorrect response. Different degrees of discrepancy were found to exist between the group's position and the subject's judgment. As predicted, private self-consciousness, i.e., attention to internal aspects of the self, had a strong inverse correlation with compliance. Public self-consciousness, i.e., concern with one's social self-presentation, was associated with a stronger inclination toward compliance behavior. (Author/CS)

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CONFORMITY BEHAVIOR AND SELF-CONSCIOUSNESS

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Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Southeastern Psychological Association, Washington, DC, March 26-29, 1980.

Conformity Behavior and Self-Consciousness

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The present paper addresses the possible relationship between conformity behavior and self-consciousness. Before we can proceed however, we must closely examine what we mean by the term conformity.

In attempting to structure the empirical findings related to conformity behavior, one is immediately struct by the large spectrum of behaviors which are called conformity. These range from the placing of uncommon adjectives at the extreme ends of a Q-sort (Erb, 1961), to performance in the Asch (1956) paradigm, to adherence to the rules by patients in an old age home (Kahana and Coe, 1969).

In order to restrict the range of conformity behavior to be considered, the author will build on a distinction suggested by Deutsch and Gerard (1955). They point out that group influence situations contain at least two distinct factors. One factor is an informational component, from the fact that other group members provide additional views on reality, which, when the situation is ambiguous, is a source of useful information. The classic demonstration of this type of influence is Sherif's (1936) work. Sherif demonstrated that a partner, by giving reports of a large magnitude, could significantly increase the distances a subject reported of the movement of an ambiguous light stimulus in a darkened room. A second factor is a normative component, which serves to inform any group member as to the expected and accepted behavior for that group. To disagree with the group is likely to lead to a negative evaluation of the dissimilar member by the group, which may then lead to ostracism and rejection (Schachter, 1951). That this pressure is relatively powerful and salient has been demonstrated by Asch (1956), where subjects conformed to the

group decision in the face of strong perceptual evidence to the contrary. The Sherif and Asch experiments may be viewed as opposite ends of a dimension of stimulus ambiguity. Sherif's research employed the highly ambiguous autokinetic effect for which physical referents are minimal. In this situation the group's informational influence is maximized, and experimental evidence shows that the subject essentially recalibrates his distance judgments in the situation. That is, though he feels he can correctly judge the amount the stimulus moves, he uses the partner's judgments to better approximate the size of the unit used to evaluate the distance moved. In contrast, the Asch experiment demonstrates group influence in the face of clear objective information to the contrary. Since group informational influence is minimized, the influence seems to be of a socio-normative nature.

One theoretically possible way to distinguish between the two forms of conformity would be to obtain a person's responses first in the presence of the group and then without the group present. To the extent that the group influence was informational, one would expect the two responses to be the same. This follows if one assumes that the subject found his personal perception to be different from the group's reported perception, assumed the difference to be attributable to himself, and therefore shifted his reported response toward the group, correcting his presumed error. With the group influence removed, the subject would continue to maintain the group induced change (relative to his initial perception) because he believes his initial perception to have been in error, and that he has now corrected it by agreeing with the group. To the extent that the group influence was socio-normative, the judgments would differ between the two situations, since the subject changed his judgment not because of the likelihood that the group was more accurate, but because of the possible negative consequences provoked by disagreeing with the group. With the group removed, the person should revert to his own judgment. The response due to

informational influence will be called a conversion response, the response to socio-normative influence a complicance response.

The above distinction has more than just logical analysis to support it. Evidence from developmental studies (Hoving, Hamm and Galvin, 1969; Allen and Newtson, 1972) suggests that age trends are different for each type of influence. With increasing age the response to group pressure for ambiguous stimuli is a positive linear trend while for unambiguous stimuli the trend is a negative one. McDavid and Sistrunk (1964) examined both types of conformity and found that the personality correlates of the people who respond to the two types of influence are quite different. Finally, Stricker, Messick and Jackson (1970) factor analyzed various influence situations and found that the conversion type response loaded on a different factor than the compliance type response. Thus the conversion-compliance distinction has demonstrated validity, and its further merits will be clear as it is applied to some of the empirical data to follow.

Self-consciousness

The present research was undertaken to examine the effects exerted upon compliance behavior by the disposition to be self-conscious. Self-consciousness, which is measured by the Self-Consciousness Scale (Fenigstein, Scheier, & Buss, 1975), is the degree to which one characteristically attends to oneself. As assessed by this instrument, self-consciousness has two dimensions that are quite distinct from each other. These dimensions correspond to two different aspects of the self to which attention may be directed. Private self-consciousness, measured by items such as "I'm generally attentive to my inner feelings," reflects an awareness of one's attitudes, thoughts, feelings, and so on. These are the covert aspects of oneself, internal and inaccessible to others. Public self-consciousness, measured by items such as "I'm concerned

about what other people think of me," reflects an awareness of oneself as a social object. This is the overt aspect of the self: how one appears to others, what kind of impression one is creating, and so on.

The private and public subscales of the self-consciousness scale have been shown to be factorially sound and reliable (Fenigstein et al., 1975). Moreover, as was suggested above, the dimensions are relatively independent of each other. Although they are invariably positively correlated, the correlation is always fairly low, ranging around .25. A considerable amount of evidence has also been gathered regarding the scale's validity as an assessment device. For example, private self-consciousness has been shown to correlate positively with the tendency to make self-focused responses on a sentence completion blank (Carver & Scheier, 1978). A variety of other data (Carver & Glass, 1976; Turner, Scheier, Carver, & Ickes, 1978) provide evidence of both convergent and discriminant validity. Of particular importance, self-consciousness has been shown to be unrelated to several dimensions that might otherwise be invoked as alternative interpretations for self-consciousness effects: e.g., intelligence, achievement motivation, activity level, test anxiety, and social desirability. Moreover, individual differences in private self-consciousness--the dimension that has received by far the greater degree of research attention thus far--have led to behavioral effects duplicating those of experimentally enhanced self-attention on at least ten occasions (Brockner, 1979; Buss & Scheier, 1976; Carver & Scheier, 1978, in press; Scheier, 1976; Scheier, Buss, & Buss, 1978; Scheier & Carver, 1977; Scheier, Carver & Gibbons, 1979; Scheier & Carver, in press). In brief, there is good evidence that the scale measures what it purports to measure.

Present Research

Our interest in the effects of self-consciousness on compliance behavior

stems from several recent research findings. These findings strongly suggest that both private and public self-consciousness are relevant to compliance phenomena. It seems likely on the basis of these findings, however, that these two dimensions of self-consciousness should exert quite divergent effects on compliance.

Private self-consciousness. People high in private self-consciousness are more cognizant of their transient affective experiences than people lower in private self-consciousness (Scheier & Carver, 1977), and are more responsive to such internal states (Scheier, 1976; Scheier, Carver, & Gibbons, 1979). Persons high in private self-consciousness even seem to be in closer touch with their moment-to-moment perceptual experiences than are persons lower in private self-consciousness. At least, this would seem to be the implication of the recent finding (Scheier, Carver & Gibbons, 1979) that persons high in private self-consciousness were especially resistant to an experimental attempt to influence their judgments of taste intensity. That research made use of a suggestibility manipulation--an off-handed remark by the experimenter--that misled subjects about the intensity of a flavored solution which they were about to taste. People low in private self-consciousness incorporated this misleading remark into their intensity judgments to a far greater degree than did people high in private self-consciousness. The latter persons presumably relied instead on the information that was provided them by their own sense of taste.

The implication of this finding for the compliance paradigm is as follows. The unanimous group creates an influence that is similar in some respects to a suggestibility manipulation. The above evidence suggests that persons high in private self-consciousness tend to rely on their own perceptual experiences, rather than on external influences. It may be that this tendency would even override the social pressure that is implicit in the unanimity of the opposing group. Such reliance on one's own opinion should be weaker, on the other hand, among

persons lower in private self-consciousness.[1] The result should be an inverse correlation between private self-consciousness and compliance behavior.

Public self-consciousness. Persons high in public self-consciousness are particularly aware of their social self-aspects. They are sensitive to and concerned with the impressions that they create on others. This concern seems to be based on a sort of social pragmatism, however, rather than a need for approval. This is evidenced by the fact that public self-consciousness has proven to be unrelated to the Crowne-Marlowe (1964) index of social desirability in at least two large samples (Turner et al., 1978). Persons high in public self-consciousness are concerned with their self-presentation, but in a way that is calculated to facilitate social exchange, rather than to solicit favorable personal evaluations.

Public self-consciousness has been studied much less thoroughly than has the private dimension. We do know some things about it, however, including the fact that persons high in public self-consciousness are more sensitive to interpersonal rejection that persons lower in public self-consciousness (Fenigstein, 1979). Inasmuch as compliance is often seen as motivated by a desire to avoid rejection (cf. Gerard & Rotter, 1961), it might therefore be predicted that public self-consciousness would correlate positively with compliance.

On the other hand, a plausible argument could be made that acts of compliance are usually based on social desirability considerations (cf. Strickland & Crowne, 1962). Inasmuch as public self-consciousness is not related to social desirability, this would argue against a simple relationship between public self-consciousness and compliance. A more complex relationship, involving both social desirability and public self-consciousness, could be predicted from this reasoning, however, as follows. The tendency to portray oneself in socially desirable ways can occur only to the degree that one is aware of oneself and one's social contexts. Persons high in public self-consciousness have a high degree of that awareness, whereas persons lower in public self-consciousness do not. It thus

could be argued that if the need for approval were present, it would be reflected in behavior only among persons who are relatively high in public self-consciousness.

Thus there are two reasonable predictions regarding the effects of the public dimension, both of which were assessed in the present study. Both, however, have this in common: whereas private self-consciousness should be associated with reduced compliance, public self-consciousness should be associated with increased compliance.

Procedure

Four subjects participated in each experimental session. Upon their arrival, the (female) experimenter brought them into the experimental room and allowed them to choose any of the four chairs available. The subjects were seated and instructed to put their headphones on. The remaining instructions and the task stimuli were played from the prerecorded tape.

Compliance Task. The task consisted of counting metronome clicks heard over a set of headphones. Low-level white noise was presented as a background for the task, thus giving it the appearance of a signal detection task. Of perhaps greater importance, the white noise minimized the likelihood of a subject's overhearing the other group members' actual responses, all of which were occurring at about the same time. The noise level did not interfere with the actual counting task, since the noise was set at a level where pilot subjects perceived no difficulty in hearing the clicks.

There were three practice trials with no background noise, 10 practice trials with noise, 10 test trials with the subject responding fourth, 10 test with the subject responding third, and 10 trials with the subject responding first. During the test trials, there were 18 veridical-response trials and 12 compliance trials. The compliance trials were sub-divided into confederate errors of one

step (six trials) and errors of two steps (six trials). The speed of the clocks on the compliance trials was 280 beats per minute. The speed of the veridical-response traial (except those that served as control trials) was varied between 100 and 200 beats per minute, to lend credibility to the task.

RESULTS

Treatment of the data. Each subject had received 12 control trials on which her responses were made prior to hearing the responses of the ostensible other group members. Each subject's responses on these 12 trials were examined, to ascertain her probability of error in the absence of group pressure. The number of errors made on these trials (of one or two steps) constituted the estimated frequency of perceptual error for that subject.

There were also 12 compliance trials during the session. On these trials, the subject responded after the other ostensible group members had agreed on an incorrect response. On 6 of these trials, the group members' judgments differed from the actual stimulus value by one click; on the other 6 trials, they differed from the actual stimulus value by two clicks. This allowed us to examine compliance behavior as influenced by two different degrees of discrepancy between the group's position and the subject's judgment. Because of this variation among compliance trials, there were three distinguishable ways in which a subject could display compliance: (a) by agreeing with the group when the group was wrong by one, (b) by agreeing with the group when the group was wrong by two, and (c) by moving one step in the group's direction when the group was wrong by two.[2] Separate analyses were conducted for total compliance (summed across all three categories) and for each individual category of compliance responses.

Correlations. Means and standard deviations of all variables are displayed in Table 1. Data were analyzed by means of partial correlations. In all of the analyses that were conducted, subjects' estimated rates of perceptual

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Insert Table 1 about here

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error were partialled out first, to control for differences in ability at the perceptual task (error rate was not related to any predictor variable in the study, $rs < .05$). With only these error estimates partialled out, private self-consciousness correlated quite significantly with total compliance, in the predicted direction, $r(54) = -.43$, $p < .001$. Further analysis revealed that this inverse relationship held in both of the compliance situations: i.e., when the group members were wrong by one click, $r(54) = -.38$, $p < .004$, and when the group members were wrong by two clicks, $r(54) = -.28$, $p < .04$. Public self-consciousness was not related to total compliance in this analysis ($r < .1$), but was marginally correlated, in the expected direction, with compliance on trials in which the group members' estimates were off by two clicks, $r(54) = .22$, $p < .10$. Consistent with earlier research (Strickland & Crowne, 1962), social desirability was positively related to overall compliance, $r(54) = .26$, $p < .06$.

The obtained correlation between private self-consciousness and compliance behavior strongly supported the prediction that had been made regarding the private self-consciousness dimension. Support for the existence of a direct relationship between public self-consciousness and compliance, on the other hand, was somewhat weaker. In order to gain additional information on the relationship between public self-consciousness and compliance, additional analyses were conducted. These analyses explored both possibilities that were outlined in this article's introduction, concerning the way in which such an effect might be mediated.

The first of these analyses tested the possibility that a direct relationship exists between public self-consciousness and compliance (i.e., unmediated by social desirability), but that the relationship might have been obscured

in the analysis reported above. Specifically, there was a positive correlation among subjects in this study between private self-consciousness and public self-consciousness, r = .21.[3] It seemed plausible that the strong effect of private self-consciousness might have attenuated somewhat the influence that appeared to be attributable to public self-consciousness. Accordingly, partial correlations were computed in which the effects of both estimated error and private self-consciousness were controlled for. These correlations indicated that public self-consciousness did correlate reliably with compliance on trials when group members' judgments had been incorrect by two clicks, $r(53)$ = .30, p < .03. The correlation with total compliance, however, still failed to achieve significance (r = .18).

The possibility that public self-consciousness might mediate compliance, but only in combination with social desirability, was assessed as follows. Subjects were divided into highs and lows on social desirability by a median split. The partial correlations between public self-consciousness and compliance (corrected only for perceptual error rate) then were computed separately for each set of subjects. If public self-consciousness were to mediate compliance only when social desirablity were high, these two groups should differ from each other in the relationships displayed between public self-consciousness and compliance. In fact the groups did not differ appreciably from each other in their patterns of correlations.

DISCUSSION

Empirical Findings

Private self-consciousness. The data from this study provide considerable support for our reasoning. Private self-consciousness was associated with the tendency for subjects to make use of their own internal perceptions of the experimental stimuli in making their judgments. This was reflected in the strong inverse correlation between private self-consciousness and compliance.

This finding further reinforces the assumption that internal aspects of the self, including perceptual experiences, are especially salient to persons who are high in private self-consciousness.

This effect of private self-consciousness bears some conceptual similarity to a previous demonstration (Scheier, Carver, & Gibbons, 1979) that persons high in private self-consciousness were resistant to a suggestibility mainpulation when making judgments of taste intensity. In the present research, however, what might be construed as a suggestibility mainpulation occurred after, rather than prior to, the perceptual event. Thus it would have influenced subjects not by creating a distracting expectation, but rather by creating implicit group pressure.

Public self-consciousness. Public self-consciousness had quite a different effect on subjects' behavior than did private self-consciousness. High levels of public self-consciousness were associated with greater compliance, particularly when a statistical technique was used to control for the effect of private self-consciousness. Moreover, this relationship did not seem to depend on social desirability. That is, although social desirability exerted an effect on compliance, that effect was not moderated by public self-consciousness. The conclusion that public self-consciousness enhances compliance requires one qualification, however. This effect occurred only on those trials on which the unanimous group members were wrong by a considerable amount in their estimations (i.e., being off by two clicks). When the group members made less extreme errors (i.e., being off by one click), public self-consciousness was relatively unrelated to compliance.

Although this aspect of the public self-consciousness result had not been predicted, we can offer one tentative explanation for its occurrence. We suggested above that persons high in public self-consciousness are not motivated by a desire to please others, but may be motivated by a desire to "get

along" socially. It seems reasonable to suggest that this desire does not invariably have an impact on behavior. Rather, it would seem to be relevant to one's behavior primarily when the potential exists to be viewed by others as relatively "extreme" in one's position, compared to the rest of the group. This would have been the case when the group expressed a consensus that deviated from the subject's perception by two clicks. And it was on these trials that public self-consciousness accurately predicted compliance. On trials where the errors were more minor, on the other hand, persons high in public self-consciousness may have felt less conspicuous in their disagreement with the majority, and thus less compelled to adopt the group's position. In sum, it may be that public self-consciousness is reliably associated with compliance only when the situation embodies a substantial risk of appearing deviant.

The present finding that public self-consciousness was positively associated with compliance may be seen as having some precedent in the literature (although there is some reason for doubting this assertion, which will be discussed below). Duval and Wicklund (1972, Chapter 5; see also Duval, 1976) experimentally manipulated self-focus in two studies, by showing subjects their live TV images through a camera-and-monitor arrangement in one case, and by playing recordings of the subjects' own voices in the other. In each case, increased self-attention led to increased conformity. Duval and Wicklund (1972) argued that these findings were consistent with a long line of research showing that conformity to a bogus consensus is maximized when the behavior occurs in public rather than private circumstances. They extrapolated from this that doing the behavior publicly induces a state of heightened self-attention.

We should point out one important fact, however. The Duval and Wicklund studies were conducted before much consideration had been given to whether experimental manipulations might be amenable to the same public-private dis-

tinction as is embodied in the Self-Consciousness Scale, But a number of people have recently begun to suggest just this possibility (e.g., Buss, in press; Scheier & Carver, in press; Carver & Scheier, Note 1; Froming, Note 2). Indeed, there is evidence from at least one research project that the effect of a TV camera is to increase not just self-awareness in general, but awareness of the public aspects of self in particular (Scheier & Carver, in press). That research produced effects of public and private self-consciousness that were quite different from each other. But private self-consciousness was associated with exactly the same effect as was produced by mirror presence, and public self-consciousness was associated with exactly the same effect as was produced by the presence of a TV camera.

To the degree that it is legitimate to view the Duval and Wicklund (1972) findings as compliance effects, we therefore would argue that they were mediated by public self-attention. If viewed in that light, the present findings would conceptually replicate the results of those previous studies. More importantly, however, the divergent influences demonstrated here for public and private self-consciousness provide an important qualification on the earlier conclusion. It is not just self-directed attention that promotes compliance, it is attention to the public self.

Normative versus informational influence. One more issue should be addressed, however, concerning the interpretation of both the present data and the previous findings. In describing our study, we have indicated that the paradigm used here creates normative pressures for conformity. There is in fact considerable support for this assumption, from two separate sources. One source is a previous experiment (Froming, Note 2) in which some subjects received auditory stimuli identical to those of the present study, and other subjects received stimuli at a rate only half that of the present study. The latter condition was such that perceptual errors were sharply curtailed, thus

minimizing the possibility of informational pressures. The amount of conformity displayed by subjects in these two conditions did not differ reliably, however. This strongly suggests that the behavior in both conditions was based on normative considerations rather than uncertainty about the physical stimuli.

The second source of information is the present study itself. In fact, this study is informative in two respects. First, it seems reasonable to assume that informational conformity should be more likely to occur when the group's error was one step from the actual count than when it was two steps away. That is, a person is simply more likely to miscount by one than by two. Yet the data showed no trace of differential conformity on one-step trials. Indeed, there was internal evidence of just the opposite tendency, in that public self-consciousness was associated with compliance, but only on two-step trials. Secondly, it should be recalled that our treatment of the data involved adjusting compliance scores for perceptual error rates before computing correlations. This procedure in effect reduces the compliance scores of subjects who made frequent errors. And it is these subjects who presumably should be most susceptible to informational influence. Thus our data treatment actually incorporated a statistical control for informational conformity, leaving only compliance effects in the data from which our correlations were computed.

In contrast, however, there is serious doubt as to whether either of the Duval and Wicklund (1972) studies measured compliance, or in fact whether they were even <u>intended</u> to measure compliance. In one of those studies, subjects were given an extremely difficulty and ambiguous task--estimating the number of dots in a matrix containing between 100 and 700 dots, which they had viewed for only four seconds. In the other study, subjects were simply asked to indicate their opinions on some issues, using scales on which modal opinions had been marked. In neither of these cases is it clear that subjects were responding to social pressures, as opposed to merely using information from an

external source that had been made available to them. Indeed, the reasoning that led Duval and Wicklund to conduct those studies was that self-focus would enhance the attribution of "error" to oneself, resulting in increased conformity to other persons' judgments. This sounds distinctly like informational conformity.

As Froming (1978) has pointed out, the variables that affect compliance may be quite different from those that affect other kinds of social influence. The present study thus makes an important contribution by using a paradigm in which compliance behavior can be isolated unambiguously.

Theoretical Implications

The results of this research have important implications for theorizing about self-consciousness. Specifically, we have demonstrated that behavior in this context is influenced in one direction by attention directed to covert aspects of the self (i.e., private self-consciousness), but is influenced in the opposite direction by attention directed to the overt aspsects of the self (i.e., public self-consciousness). This finding does not contradict the previous theorizing of Fenigstein et al. (1975), but it does extend their reasoning substantially. Those authors argued merely that the public and private dimensions would be relevant to different kinds of behavioral circumstances. Our data indicate, in contrast, that both dimensions may be relevant in the same circumstance, but in quite different ways. Further support for this assertion comes from the finding, in a very different research paradigm, that private and public self-consciousness had quite disparate influences on subjects' responses to a "social" manipulation of psychological reactance (Carver & Scheier, in press). A third source of support is the finding that private and public self-consciousness have different implications for a dissonance effect (Scheier & Carver, in press; see also Carver & Scheier, 1981, for additional discussion of these effects).

It seems reasonable to conclude from these studies that what aspect of the self one chooses as the object of one's attention has important consequences for the prediction of any behavior that has both public and private determinants. Indeed, this point is illustrated quite clearly by the findings of the present study. Compliance is affected by a variety of factors within the self. Some of these factors pertain to one's perceived place in the social context, others concern the salience of one's own immediate experience. Our data indicate that which of these two self-aspects is taken as the object of one's attention can have a critical impact on the behavior that results.

TABLE 1

Means and standard deviations of variables measured in the study.

Measure	M	s.d.
Private self-consciousness	24.39	4.67
Public self-consciousness	18.88	4.81
Social desirability	15.13	5.48
Perceptual errors	2.96	2.52
Compliance on one-step trials	1.79	1.48
Compliance on two-step trials	2.02	1.59
Overall compliance	3.81	2.67

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